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Colby addresses CIA

misconceptions in talk

Editor's note — Jennifer Plant, summer staff reporter for The Oak Ridger and sophomore at the University of the South, Sewanee, is news editor of the University newspaper, "The Sewanee Purple." Here she writes of a talk given by William E. Colby, former director of the CIA at Sewanee Tuesday.

By JENNIFER PLANT

William E. Colby didn't look like a "real live spy" as he addressed some 350 students gathered in Convocation Hall on the University of the South at Sewanee campus Tuesday.

Colby, a former director of the CIA, spoke on "Tension, Terrorism, and Intelligence in the 1980s."

With his gray hair, conservative gray suit and black-rimmed glasses, he looked like any ordinary professor on the campus.

"I think some of you may be a little disappointed," he said. "You may be wondering, 'Why doesn't he look more exotic? He sure doesn't look like a spy.'" Colby said this attitude was based on some misconceptions Americans have about the CIA and the role of Intelligence in today's world.

"The real change (in Intelligence) came as a result of World War II and the attack on Pearl Harbor," he said. "The attack wasn't really a result of lack of information. It was just that the information hadn't been brought to a central place." Thus the Central Intelligence Agency.

Although Colby admitted that the CIA today still relies on spies to "centralize" information concerning foreign countries, and especially the Soviet Union, he said, "We have applied American genius in technology to intelligence."

"We were able to develop a plane to spy on Russia," Colby said, as a result of the application of this technology. "However, within three years, they developed a missile that could knock it down." The plane was not completely useless, he countered. "When we used the plane in Cuba, we discovered offensive nuclear missiles." Colby said the discovery of this intelligence gave former President John F. Kennedy "time to develop a peaceful settlement."

"The technological intelligence has been a new development," Colby explained. "We can even tell when a nuclear weapon has been activated on the other side of the world by the tremors in the earth's crust. This has been a revolutionary concept in intelligence."

First intelligence was centralized, then expanded to include new technologies, and then, Colby said, "Americans were not satisfied with only one or two changes." The third change? "American Intelligence must operate under the American government and Constitution."

"There's some justice to that," Colby continued. "People used to think that law and intelligence were two different things." As an example, he said, "When the CIA was organized in the late 1940s, it was given orders to be more ruthless than adversary. People said, 'Isn't that what Intelligence is supposed to do?'"

Colby said a contradiction developed to that belief. "A traditional spy service is one thing, but this larger service is different. When we built the new CIA headquarters along the Potomac River, Bobby Kennedy, then an attorney general, saw the large building with the sign that said 'CIA' out front." Kennedy felt that the building was too conspicuous for a spy service, so the sign was taken down. "And for 15 years we pretended it wasn't there, although boaters on the river used it as a checkpoint. Turn left

The contradictions grew, Colby said, especially with the advent of Watergate and the Vietnam War. An "orgy of recriminations" was sparked in the '70s, he said. This "orgy," he said, "brought up some things that CIA had done that it should not have done. People then thought CIA was under every bed and was responsible for every disaster." It gave foreign countries a sense we weren't serious about our intelligence. They were afraid they'd be exposed by submitting intelligence."

Since that time, Colby said, "We have set up some procedures whereby intelligence will be conducted under the Constitution systems of control. Today it's clear that more people than the generals need to be informed about the kinds of intelligence we're dealing with. The people are the ultimate deciders of these questions in America."

In applying the use of intelligence to the world today, Colby said, "We must look at the world around us. We must start with the Soviet Union. Our problem is that we have to KNOW about those weapons. We know their army and navy has been enlarged. We know the Soviets produce more oil and steel than any country."

He said America must keep a watch on the transfer of power in the Soviet Union. "I expect a transfer of power will result in the rise of some product of party bureaucracy. The man will be somewhat cautious about his ventures and will not want to wreck all he's built. But he could be someone like Kruschev — reckless. Or it could be a general or admiral who decides they must use the Soviet force before it is overcome by American force. We're going to have to understand the nature of this threat."

Other countries Colby said intelligence must focus on include China, Brazil, underdeveloped countries, and the economic stability of the developed coun-

Colby cautioned, "We have to be careful that we understand the real threat. Do we need to match all Russian weapons? No, we need weapons capable of stopping Soviet tanks from going across western Europe, capable of stopping Russian submarines. "We have to use intelligence to negotiate possible limits on these weapons."

Following Colby's talk, a question and answer period began. One audience member questioned Colby on the 1962 Cuban missile crisis. "When the government wrote notes to Kruschev, he responded by asking us about NATO missiles in Turkey. Why has nothing more been said about this?" Colby was asked.

"It was a strange sort of coincidence," Colby joked. "When the Soviet missiles were removed from Cuba, the missiles were removed from Turkey."

After James Schlesinger was named to Nixon's cabinet, Colby replaced him as CIA director. "We found out we had been involved in other plots that were not honorable. I wrote a series of directives to people and put those in the safe and let them stay there. About a year and a half later I got a call from the New York Times. They said they had heard CIA had been involved in a great domestic operation. I told them, 'You've run into something where we've had to clear up loose ends.' They took my statement as a confirmation."

Colby also commented on other aspects of the CIA including their role in the Iranian crisis, the SALT II agreement.

"Intelligence is never going to be a crystal ball," he concluded. "Rather it is going to be there to warn you of possible and probable developments. The spy is no longer the total prototype and intelligence is no longer a little spy service. We are going to see our intelligence improve and we will continue to have what we have today — the best intelligence in the world."